

Tens of thousands of educators protest on Teachers' Day in Mexico; Eleventh hour deal at Toronto Transit Commission

Workers Struggles: The Americas

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The World Socialist Web Site invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature

Latin America

Tens of thousands of educators protest on Teachers' Day in Mexico

On May 15, Teachers' Day in Mexico, tens of thousands of educators marched in Mexico City and cities across Mexico demanding a 100 percent wage increase, decent pensions, and the defense of public education.

Retirement payments have become a major issue, as school districts and universities replace traditional social security payments with privatized systems based on stock-market returns, at the hands of private investors.

Also, on May 15, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum announced a wage increase of 9 percent, which was immediately rejected by the CNTE union, far short of its demand for 100 percent increase; elementary school teachers earn 6,000 pesos per month (347 US dollars), taking home 3,000 pesos, after taxes and pension payments.

Protesting teachers denounced Sheinbaum's offer as an invitation to strike. Mexico's two teacher federations, the CNTE and the SNTE, have set strike dates of June 1 (CNTE) and May 25 (SNTE).

Argentina Airline workers protest layoffs

On Friday, May 15 protests took place in scores of Argentine airports demanding the rehiring of 140 laid-off workers from the National Weather Service, a necessary component of airline safety. As a consequence of the layoffs, more than 25 weather stations are short-handed and with no night service, conditions that imperil air safety.

The airline unions have threatened a national strike this week if the weather service workers are not immediately rehired.

Airline workers also protested the refusal of the Milei administration to pay already agreed-upon wage increases.

United States

West Virginia drivers and warehouse workers strike The Beverage Market

Some 50 drivers and warehouse workers for Charleston, West Virginia's distributor, The Beverage Market, went on strike May 12 against extensive concession demands. Members of Teamsters Local 175 distribute Miller, Coors, Modelo, Red Bull and other beverages to 30 counties in West Virginia.

In a statement, Teamsters Local 175 secretary treasurer Luke Farley declared, "The company is demanding concessions in just about every aspect of benefit that these employees enjoy. They want to go backwards. They want to increase health insurance premiums by 900 percent. They want to eliminate significant portions of these employees' retirement."

Workers voted overwhelmingly back on May 3 to authorize a strike. No negotiations are taking place.

Farley said, "It's disturbing that Miller would allow this distributor's disgusting behavior to negatively impact its market share in West Virginia." Despite Teamster representation of drivers and warehouse workers throughout the country who deliver these same products, Local 175 has limited its campaign to billboard announcements of the strike and boycott leafleting at events.

Parents and students protest forced resignations at New York Westchester County school district

Parents and students held a protest outside of Alexander Hamilton High School May 15 to protest the forced resignations of teachers and staff in New York's Elmsford School District in New York's Westchester County. The district has been plagued by a high turnover rate of staff and teachers.

A social media post claims that 31 staff members have been terminated between January 2025 and May 2026. Gradually, the terminations have come to light and parents and students claim the loss of qualified teachers is undermining the quality of education.

Former school board member Dr. Suzanne Phillips has interviewed teachers who claim their resignations were forced. "Parents, families and especially students are concerned that they have been losing teachers," said Phillips. "They don't understand why they've been losing teachers. They're primarily teachers of color, regardless of what other sources may say."

California EdSource news workers strike against stalled bargaining and unilateral changes to healthcare

Workers at the educational newsroom EdSource in California went on strike May 14 over management's unilateral changes to healthcare benefits and to protest stalled contract negotiations. According to the EdSource News Guild, a unit of the Pacifica Media Workers Guild, the changes have resulted in increases to co-pays and deductibles.

Workers at EdSource, the largest education newsroom in California, first organized about a year-and-a-half ago and are seeking a first contract. Negotiations over issues such as wages, healthcare, sick leave and protections against replacement by freelance and temporary workers as well as AI remain unresolved.

After month-long strike Olin Winchester workers in Missouri ratify contract

Workers at the Olin Winchester Lake City Army Ammunition Plant in Independence, Missouri returned to work on May 7 after ratifying a new collective bargaining agreement. The approximately 1,300 workers of IAM Local 778 initially went on strike April 4 to defend their living standards maintain a semblance of work-life balance.

The workers confronted a concerted management efforts to enforce speed-ups and heightened exploitation to meet the demands of the US Defense Department as the war with Iran continues. The plant produces the vast majority of small-caliber ammunition for the US military.

No details have been made public about the agreement outside of union's press release. Although the union calls the agreement a "victory," the press release itself suggests the IAM has again sold out the rank-and-file, noting only that the four-year agreement provides "some relief from forced overtime," and that it represents "meaningful progress and a foundation for continued improvements," hardly a ringing endorsement.

Olin Winchester management has been involved in a campaign of cost-cutting at the factory since December 2024, aiming to cut \$250 million in costs by 2028. A key component of this strategy has been "right-sizing" the work force, which has led to enforced overtime among remaining workers. Workers at the factory say around four years ago, overtime went from being optional to mandatory, with workers taking time a day off forced to make up the work on another day.

The IAM has not released the vote total for the ratification, which came only a week and a half after workers rejected a management offer because it provided only "minor relief" from mandatory overtime and did not offer wage increases that would keep up with the cost of living.

Clerical workers at northern Indiana public utility ratify contract, ending lockout

Clerical workers at Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO) have ratified a new contract and returned to work ending a lockout that began April 2. The 1,600 workers are members of United Steelworkers Local 13796.

In a statement hailing the deal NIPSCO declared, 'These agreements deliver first and foremost improved safety standards, more efficient emergency response for our customers, above-historical wage increases and expanded benefits for our people, along with additional career development opportunities. They reflect our commitment to our workforce and to the communities across Northern Indiana we are privileged to serve.'

The contracts with the two unions provide raises and enhanced health

benefits, among other things, according to NIPSCO.

The lockout followed company demands for major concessions, including increased use of outside contractors, a mandatory overtime acceptance rate, and "potential limitations on work continuity during outages" according to the USW. Details of the settlement are not available.

Workers reported on social media that management used the lockout to force older workers into retirement "Union NIPSCO employees returned to find the personal effects in their lockers were discarded and refrigerator lines cut so they had no way to store any perishable food they brought to eat..." a worker noted.

Canada

Eleventh hour deal at Toronto Transit Commission after multiple lockout deadlines pass

In late breaking news on Monday, management at the Toronto Transit Commission announced that a tentative agreement had been reached with union officials from the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). Negotiations had continued between management and union officials despite the expiration of several lockout "deadlines" over the weekend set by management in pursuit of its onerous contract demands. The previous collective agreement between the TTC and about 700 communications, electrical and signal workers in the city's above and below-ground transit systems had expired on March 31.

The workers voted last month by 99.5 percent to authorize strike activity should an agreement not be reached. Union officials, however, were quick to announce their reluctance to strike and did not name a deadline for a work stoppage, although they were in a legal strike position. Key issues included wages and more stable shift scheduling. TTC management issued repeated public statements rejecting outright worker demands for a wage increase to keep up with inflation.

Management had earlier arranged with the provincial labour board for a legal lockout position to be allowed beginning this past Friday at midnight. However, management, fully aware of the CUPE leaderships reluctance to mobilize their membership in strike action, used two lapsed deadlines to continue their public attacks, denouncing worker wage demands as outrageous.

Looming over the negotiations are the beginning of the FIFA World Cup with the Toronto venue kickoff game set for June 12.

Hydro Quebec unions launch overtime ban

Last week over 9,000 workers across the Hydro Quebec network began an overtime ban in pursuit of their demands for contractual job protections against management's use of third-party contract labour. The action involves two unions, the Trades Employees Union and the Technologists Union both affiliated to CUPE and the Quebec Federation of Labour.

An essential services agreement is already in place such that Hydro Quebec management has announced that the overtime ban will have "no impact" on daily operations.





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